

SC063110

Registered provider: Suffolk County Council

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides care for up to four children aged between eight and 17 who may have experienced neglect and/or emotional abuse or had a traumatic experience that has left them vulnerable and who may find it difficult to manage in society.

The home has not had a registered manager since 13 January 2020.

Inspection date: 6 March 2020

Date of last inspection: 20 June 2019

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

This inspection

The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection

This home was judged requires improvement to be good at the last full inspection. At the interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness.

Children are making good progress in many areas of their lives. Some of the children have grown in confidence, particularly in social situations. One child recently had their art work exhibited at the local library, which helped boost their self-esteem. The staff have persevered well to encourage children to do more for themselves. Other children spend time with external counsellors and are making clear progress in dealing with their difficulties.

Children who are new to the home receive good support. This is because children only come to live at the home if the manager is satisfied that the staff have the skills and expertise to meet each child's individual needs.

All children now have education placements; however, some of the children refuse to attend. One of the children stays in bed most days until late morning or afternoon. This has a negative impact on her daily routines. Another child is refusing to attend school because the staff are not able to take her. The manager has arranged for a taxi to and from school, but the child wants the staff's physical support. During the inspection, the staff were observed trying to motivate the children, but this was unsuccessful. One of the children is doing extremely well in education and currently undertaking a level 2 qualification in health and social care.

The staff understand the children's family dynamics and build relationships with families. The staff help the children to see their families and to develop and maintain these important relationships.

Children's bedrooms are personalised to suite their tastes. The overall state of repair and the quality of decor, furnishings and fixtures are satisfactory. However, parts of the home are looking tired and a little worn. Some of the walls have been washed several times so the paint has come off. The walls are bare and lack personalisation.

Case records reflect the work that the staff do to support the children. Regular audits and reviews ensure that plans and assessments reflect the current and changing needs of each child. The staff have aspirations for the children and work collaboratively to meet their needs.

Safeguarding issues are promptly investigated, recorded and resolved in a timely manner. All members of the staff team have safeguarding training and demonstrated that they know what to do if they have a concern about a child's well-being. Sound recruitment procedures ensure that only those adults with safe working histories are employed. All the necessary background checks are carried out before a member of staff commences work. The children said that they feel safe living at this home.

The staff successfully de-escalate situations, in order to manage the children's more challenging behaviours. Physical restraint is only used when necessary to protect the children or the staff from harm. All members of the staff team are trained in the method of restraint used. The incidents of restraint are recorded well and include, when possible, children's views.

Missing-from-home episodes have increased in recent months. On occasions, two children have regularly gone missing together. The increase in these incidents could expose children to risk. However, when the children go missing, the staff respond promptly and are resourceful in seeking them out. The staff make a concerted effort to keep in contact and locate children as quickly as possible.

Sanctions and consequences are not consistent and they are ineffective in helping children to reflect on and modify their behaviour. There has been an over-reliance on the removal of Wi-Fi. There is little evidence to suggest that the strategies are effective. Furthermore, the management team does not monitor all the records of sanctions and therefore is not able to ensure that sanctions are proportionate and relevant to the situation.

The staff team is diverse and includes staff of each gender and differing ages and ethnicity. Most of the staff have a relevant childcare qualification. The staff said that they are supported. However, some staff have not received regular supervision in line with the home's policy. All staff have their performance appraised annually. Although there is a positive approach to training, the organisation has not met a recommendation that was raised at the last inspection. The existing programme does not include training on topics such as children's mental health, anxiety and depression, or understanding county lines or gang affiliation, despite some children being vulnerable to these issues.

Visits by an independent person provide detailed and impartial scrutiny of the running of the home. The independent person's reports show the children's progress and experiences and include the views of children and relevant professionals. However, the independent person does not always give their opinion on how well the home safeguards children and promotes their well-being.

The managers have met the four requirements and four of the five recommendations raised at the last inspection, to good effect. Following this inspection, one recommendation in relation to staff training has been raised as a requirement.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/06/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
07/08/2018	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
04/04/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
19/07/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6(1)(a)(b)(2)(c)(i))	31/03/2020
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(f)(h))	31/03/2020
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development;	30/04/2020

receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(a)(b))	
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. The independent person must produce a report about a visit ('the independent person's report') which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44(1)(4)(a)(b))	30/04/2020

Recommendations

- Children's home staff should act as effective advocates for or on behalf of a child who may be experiencing difficulties with education or training matters including, but not limited to, attainment, admissions, attendance or behaviour, as a good parent would do. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.12)
- The registered person must ensure the necessary support is given to children to enable them to access their education or training. Support may include, for example, putting in place practical arrangements such as transporting the child to school, support by staff to learn how to use public transport confidently and safely, or the use of technology to connect with on-line learning. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.13)

Information about this inspection

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC063110

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Suffolk County Council, Endeavour House, Russell Road, Ipswich IP1 2BX

Responsible individual: Clifford James

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Cathy Russell, Social Care Inspector

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